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AUTHOR Barnes, Edward J.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the implications of the behavioral and social sciences as applied to minority group education. Various explanations for the failure of poor minority-group children in school are reviewed. A comparison between the mental health model of human behavior and the aggregate or systems model is made. [Because of the quality of print of the original, reproductions of this document will not be sharply legible.] (Author/JW)

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Ethnic Minority Issues on the Utilization of Behavioral and Social Science in a Pluralistic Society

The Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences in Minority Group Education: Some Critical Implications

by

Edward J. Barnes
Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
& Director of University-Community Educational
Program, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh
Pennsylvania 15213

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The Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences in Minority Group Education: Some Critical Implications

The Problem

It is almost a cliche today, to state that the American Public Educational System has largely failed in its efforts to educate the children of lower-status or oppressed minority groups. Tested academic achievement, on the average, is consistently found lagging behind grade expectancy. The tendency to fall behind appears as early as the first grade, intensifies as the child moves through the upper grades, such that by the 6th grade, the average young inner-city dweller has fallen behind approximately 3 grades in mathematics and reading (Clark, 1970).[1] Cursory thought is sufficient to reveal that it is the existence of these groups, in terms of their values, that the larger society virtually ignores, while embracing those values reflecting the "White Anglo-Saxon Ideal." Thus, there appears to be a direct relationship between the degree to which a group's values, norms, life styles, and life experiences are excluded from representation in the institutions of the society, and the failure of the society's schools to educate its members.

Apparently, the schools, as sub-systems of the larger societal system, reflects the dominant trends of the society, vis-a-vis its powerless minorities.

Over the past several years, particularly with the advent of the "War on Poverty" concept, increased attention has been given to this grave national problem, an increased emphasis reflected in the numerous investigations and studies of various groups; national civil rights organizations, grass roots community groups government officials, Parents, Social and Behavioral Scientists, Teachers, Educators, etc. Numerous programs: "educational enrichment," "demonstration," "compensatory," "Pilot," etc., have been brought to bear on this problem, but, for the most part these efforts have not produced sustained improvement in the skills of reading and mathematics (Clark, 1970; Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966). The increased attention to the educational needs of these children has been accompanied by a larger and more active role in this domain on the part of behavioral and social scientists. This trend is reflected in federal efforts such as

Head Start and Follow-Through, and in private efforts such as the "crash program" of remedial reading at the Northside Center for Child Development in New York designed in 1955 by K. B. Clark, and the Clearifying Environments Project at the University of Pittsburgh, designed by O. K. Moore. It is assumed that the behavioral and social sciences have particular contributions to make toward the resolution of this dilemma. Presumably, those with training in these fields can bring their knowledge and expertise, theoretical, substantive and methodological, to bear upon theoretical and applied problems in the education of members of minority groups.

If this is the case, at least three questions need explicit articulation: (1) What specifically do these fields have to contribute, currently, to explanation and resolution of the problem? (2) What potentially do they have to contribute? (3) What factors might hinder or facilitate maximum future contributions?

A comprehensive response to the first question would take us far beyond the space and time allowed in this paper, however, we can sketch a broad outline. While the persistent and cumulative educational underachievement

of students in large inner-city areas is conceded, there is no consensus as to cause or as to remedy. However, most currently offered theoretical explanations tend to locate the causal factors within the child and his family, while excluding or minimizing the schools and other institutions as determinants themselves. The total spectrum of theories offered in explanation of underachievement in these groups can be subsumed under five category designations: (1) biological or racial, (2) physiological, (3) demographic, (4) psychological, and (5) sociological. The following section presents a brief description and analysis of each of the categories of explanation.[2]

Biological or Racial Explanations

The biological or racial explanations have probably been around the longest, and are periodically brought forward to explain differences between members of the majority and those of oppressed minority groups, and to justify practices which maintain these groups in positions of subjugation. A notable historical example of this operation pertains to maintenance and justification of the status of slavery (Stamps, 1956). These explanations

in their crude and sophisticated forms are racist in their assertion that black and other oppressed minority children, as a group, achieve below whites because of their genetic inferiority to whites. However, whatever one thinks of these explanations, they cannot be ignored because they are part of the fabric of American History, and are consistent with contemporary pattern of racism. Consequently such explanations have considerable potential influence on those at decisive policy making levels.

A unique feature of these explanations is that they do not provide for any form of external or post-natal manipulation to prevent academic retardation and to increase individual achievement. Explanations within this framework, as exemplified by Professor Jensen (1969) in his assessment of the National Head Start effort, assert that compensatory education programs will not work, that desegration will not work, that quality educational programs will not work, and imply that nothing short of biological control can be effective.

Numerous criticisms can be invoked against the validity of these theories, ranging from those that are obvious, such as criticisms focusing

on the flaws in the definition of race, to the more analytic criticisms, as exemplified by Valentine (1971) who asserts, that "any theory of class or racial deficits of biological origin is undemonstrable and scientifically untestable, in an ethnically plural and structurally discriminatory society. The necessary separation of biological and socio-cultural factors is methodologically impossible in this setting" (p. 138). Clark (1970) points out a most obvious flaw nevertheless, one which has not been highlighted before namely, that these theories do not explain the fact that low-income white students in urban public schools are also, as a group, consistently retarded in tested performance in academic subjects.

Physiological Explanations

Physiological theories which focus on neurological and sensory deficiencies, assert that the academic retardation of poverty stricken minority-group children is a consequence of the by-products of poverty and deprivation. Knoblock and Pasamanick (1960) have been leaders in the study of brain and neurological defects resulting from prenatal and post-natal malnutrition.

Obviously this theory will explain academic retardation in some cases; however, there is evidence that, even in extreme cases of mental retardation and organic brain damage, when these children are taught in a supportive educational situation and are accepted by their teachers, they make striking gains, both educational and personal (Kirk, 1958). There is danger in attributing academic retardation to physiological causes for oppressed minority group children, in view of the prevalence of educational under-achievement in this group, and given the present ambiguity in the diagnosis of mental deficiencies. In day-to-day operations, it is a simple matter to substitute physiological deficit for genetic inferiority in which case policy and programming proceeds as if the latter is the causal factor.

Demographic Explanations

Demographic theories give emphasis to where children live and go to school in explaining their educational achievement. Coleman (1966) found that the academic performance of black youngsters increased after attending a previously all white school. Kleinberg (1935) found that black youngsters born in the Northern part of the U. S. scored higher on I.Q. tests than did

their newly arrived counterparts from the southern part of the country. However, the differential tended to washout over time, as the southern born youngsters remained in the North, apparently reflecting the positive benevolent influence of the northern setting. Thus, it is asserted that large numbers of lower-status children, whose families migrated from southern to northern states, brought with them the consequences of segregated and inferior educational experiences (Pettigrew, 1964). If this were the controlling factor, one would expect a direct positive relation between length of time in the "better schools" and increase in academic achievement. Such a trend was noted in the 1930's, but it did not continue beyond the 1950's (Clark, 1970). In recent years, the evidence suggests that there is no difference in educational achievement between those children who spend all their lives in Northern inner-city urban schools, and those who migrated from the south.

Psychological Explanations

Psychological theories which emphasize variables such as individual motivation, self-image, delay of gratification, anxiety, achievement expectancy, etc., as an explanation of the educational achievement of oppressed

and poor children contend that lower-status children are low in achievement motivation (Rosen, 1959; Mussen, 1953; Deutsch, 1960), unrealistically high in aspirations levels (Katz, 1968; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1958; Deutsch, 1960; Johnson, 1941); that black youngsters have incomplete self-images (Rainwater, 1967; Gordeon, 1965; Coles, 1965; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1965), negative self-images and a preference for things white (Proshansky and Newton, 1968; Rainwater, 1967; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Morland, 1962; Goodman, 1952) and that lower-status youngsters have an inability to delay gratification (Mischel, 1961 and 1966), and are frustrated when required to learn or are held to high educational standards (Proshansky and Newton, 1967). It is also contended that academic aspirations are depressed by the effects of discrimination on previous and present generations, and that these children and their families receive no economic or social awards which they can realistically hope to attain through academic achievement (Proshansky and Newton, 1967). Students having these social-psychological handicaps, combined with low motivation, are expected to be inattentive, hyperactive, hostile, and aggressive.

While such explanations assert that the academic retardation is a consequence of these motivational and behavioral handicaps, it is just as conceivable that these handicaps are a consequence of the educational deprivation these children experience. Regardless of the explanation, when one finds a disproportionate number of psychologically impaired children in a school system, one cannot realistically deal with this problem in terms of individual clinical methods and therapy, but must address rather the problem of bringing about the necessary changes within the educational system itself which produces such casualties.

Sociological (cultural) Explanations

The last explanatory category, sociological explanations, exphasizes cultural, class, and environmental differences as determining factors in the low academic achievement of minority group students and as placing limitations on the students' ability to profit from formal educational experiences. Some specific environmental features cited as inhibiting learning are neighborhood crime and delinquency (Miller, 1958); broken homes (Kahl, 1953; Mischel, 1961); poverty which sends children to school

without breakfast, without adequate rest, and which prevents parents from providing quiet places of study (Deutsch, 1963; Sexton, 1961). Other factors cited include overcrowded living quarters, deteriorated and unsanitary housing, no books in the home, and the strong influence of peers among lower status children, a condition interpreted as adversely affecting the desire to pursue academic learning.[3] The linguistic patterns of lower-status, particularly black, children, also are said to act as inhibitors to academic learning (Whiteman and Deutsch, 1967; Ausubel, 1964). Considerable evidence has been adduced to demonstrate that blacks have developed structurally differentiated dialectal variants of English and other European languages, indicating ethnic distinctiveness in areas of expressive culture (Kochman, 1972; Stewart, 1965). These findings are the base of the cultural difference hypothesis. The difficulty turns on the point that the school curriculum is based on "standard English," a factor with presumably presents the black child with a Promethean barrier to academic mastery. This position appears to posit a separation of black subculture and mainstream

culture as a central assumption. However an alternative position could be developed based on a biculturation assumption. The decisive factor is that the schools do not reflect a bicultural or ethnic pluralism in its structure and functioning. It should be noted that the data cited shows a consistent relationship between social and cultural status and academic achievement, and on this basis a causal relationship is assumed to exist. But it is critical to note that no causal relationship has been demonstrated.

If sociological explanations are accepted, then the most direct way to increase academic achievement of students who are victims of their conditions is to change those conditions, an approach which would necessitate a vast program of social change. However, there is evidence that the academic achievement of socially devalued children can be improved without changes in the pattern of sociological deprivation, given improved quality of education (Kirk, 1958; Clark, 1965; Cloward, 1967). The sociological explanation should be applied cautiously. It provides an all too easy route to abnegation of responsibility since improved education would have to await massive changes in other societal features and, as such,

is a formula for maintaining the status quo in the schools. Witness the Nixon administration's approach to the interrelated problems of defacto segregation of schools and segregated housing patterns in the north. Furthermore, as Clark (1970) indicates, those in control of the public schools do not have significant decision making power within the larger society. The only processes over which they have effective control is education. Thus, it is in that domain that they must exercise their power to improve the quality of education. Besides, only when educational quality is held constant will the influence of other factors on learning be ascertainable.

In assessing current endeavors to educate minority children, Gordon and Wilkerson (1966) make the following observations:

> "Most of what is being done in the area of curriculum change is being done in a tradition of unscientific innovation . . . . Many of the innovations consume considerable time and money. Few of them are based on identifiable premises or viable hypotheses. Very often these innovations appear to have resulted from isolated, poorly controlled trial and error discoveries . . . . For example, there is little evidence or theoretical basis for judging either homogeneous or heterogeneous groupings as providing the more effective learning situation. Homogeneous grouping may, indeed, provide an easier teaching situation, but in practice it often serves

> simply to segregate the minority group children from their more privileged peers. Given the evidence suggesting that segregation is, per se, a handicap to the achievement of educational quality, and given, in addition, the school problem of the time, it might be well for school systems to examine the premise on which they have overwhelmingly adopted homogeneous grouping. It is quite possible that the more difficult teaching situation provided by heterogeneous grouping is also the more productive in the total development of the child." (p. 169)

Gordon and Wilkerson make a similar criticism for certain structural changes in the programs, such as team teaching, utilization of technology, modifications in teacher-pupil ratio, etc. Assuming the foregoing to be a valid analysis, the greatest contribution behavioral science can make to the educational process, as it applies to these children, would seem to be twofold: (1) providing the necessary theoretical and empirical basis for program development, and (2) bringing the theoretical and methodological frameworks of behavioral science to bear on the theoretical and applied problems of education. To speak more specifically, it is the writer's conviction that the fundamental contribution the behavioral and social sciences can make to the process of educating lower-status children would be the identification of patterns

of interrelatedness of individual learner characteristics, characteristics of the individual's social context, and outcomes in the teaching-learning process. This position rests on the assumption that explanations based on dimensions or variables in a single domain cannot account for the current level of academic performance of oppressed children, as a group, nor can they provide a basis for remedy.

If the foregoing is valid, then the question becomes what does behavioral science have in the way of theoretical frameworks, methods, and empirical findings which reflects or stem from this interactive point of view? An examination of relevant literature is instructive. In reviewing the literature one is struck by the extent to which lower-status minority children, particularly black children, are separated from families, even conceptually, and the further separation of black children and black families from the black community. But the most glaring factor concerns the separation of the black community from the surfounding white community. It seems obvious that we who are concerned about black children must think

about them in relation to black families and the black community, never forgetting that this entire configuration is embedded in a society which devalues everything black.

A second realization occurring with great impact on the writer, concerned the essentially negative nature of research findings and interpretations as they pertain to lower-status and particularly black children. Findings from a variety of sources converge to indicate the black child's incomplete self image (Rainwater, 1967; Gordon, 1965; Coles, 1965; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1963); his negative self image and preference for things "white" (Proshansky and Newton, 1968; Rainwater, 1967; Goodman, 1952; Clark and Clark, 1947; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Radke and Trager, 1950; Morland, 1962; Landreth and Johnson, 1953); his rejection of and expressed hostility toward his own group (Goodman, 1952; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Clark and Clark, 1947).

If it is the case that the black child feels disdain or hatred for his group, therefore, for himself, and experiences himself as incomplete,

as indicated above, then one would expect such factors to have negative effects on his behavior and experiences. Reported research findings which can be subsumed under two categories, "cognitive and affective status", and "achievement orientation" converge to support hypothesized effects. The literature shows the black child to be characterized by high anxiety level (Feld and Lewis, 1967; Hill and Sarason, 1966; Sarason, et. al., 1960; Palermo, 1959; Caldwell, 1959); a high level of maladjustment (Rainwater, 1967; Baykin, 1957) and neuroticism (Hammer, 1953), given to a rejection of other blacks (Yarrow, 1958) he is shown as having an inability to delay gratification (Mischel, 1966, 1961 b) presumably a critical factor in immature, criminal and neurotic behavior (Mowrer and Ullman, 1945), as having low level orientation toward achievement (Mischel, 1961 b), a proneness toward delinquency (Mischel, 1961 a); confusion of sexual identity or cross sex-role adoption (Burton, 1961, Hofanson and Calden, 1960, Lott and Lott, 1963, Sclare, 1953); and a sense of little personal control over his environment presumably a weakness (Crandall, et al., 1965).

Intellectual functioning is typically at the low average to borderline range, and accompanied by poor ability for critical thinking - analytical and synthetical (Barnes, 1969).[4]

Findings from the "achievement domain" showed black youngsters as low in achievement motivation (Rosen, 1959; Mussen, 1953; Deutsch, 1960; McClelland, 1961); or as unrealistically high in aspiration levels (Katz, 1968; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1958; Deutsch, 1960; Johnson, 1941);[5] and as low in expectancy of success (Katz, 1968; Lefcourt and Ladwig, 1965).

Placing the black youngster within the context of the black family generates the following image. The "Negro" family is portrayed as having a distinct life style, different from all other segments of the society. More often than not the father has deserted the family; the mother, frustrated because of her own unfulfilled needs and wishes, reacts harshly and rejects the children. Her frustration generally is a "causal" factor in her having more "illegitimate" children. The children in turn, react to this hostile atmosphere by becoming aggressive, nontrusting, and uneducable.

They experience unusual difficulty in differentiating between male and female roles, and cross-role adoptions are the rule. By age 3 or 4 years the black child is aware of racial differences including a knowledge of the usual associated stereotypes, but is slow to make racial distinctions; and parents (mother) are not able to help him with questions and anxiety around black-white issues and concerns. He frequently chooses white dolls and white friends and often identifies himself as white, or shows a pained reluctance to "admitting" he is "Negro." While much of the direct manifestation of "self-hate" disappears by seven or eight years of age, definite indications of it still exist later; for example, "shooting" dope to escape the image, or "pimping" and having illegitimate children to deny it.[6]

Thus, the attention given so far to characteristics of lower-status children has given rise to sweeping generalizations, many of highly questionable validity. The tendency is to identify certain conditions and characteristics found frequently in some lower-status children and then to assume these factors to be typical of the group. As indicated earlier,

concurrence between certain conditions and certain characteristics and low academic achievement is given a causal interpretation. Furthermore, do the foregoing configurations of findings and projections tell the whole story? The writer thinks not. Theoretical explanations can be questioned on the grounds of their failure to account for the full spectrum of findings in the various empirical studies; for example, what about that 33% to 77% in the Clark (1949) studies, or the 87% in The Greenwald and Appenheim study (1968), or the 46% to 68% in Morland's (1962, 1966) studies who did not select white dolls as being "like themselves?" How does one account for Boyd's (1952) findings of higher aspiration level of blacks compared to whites when groups were matched for age, IQ, and socioeconomic status? Lott and Lott's study (1963) suggest that blacks can have <u>high</u> and <u>realistic</u> levels of occupational aspirations. It is of interest to note that when empirical results are not consistent with theoretical expectancy, usually they are intepreted so as to be consistent with expectations. The concepts of "unrealistic (high) aspiration level", or "overachiever" seem to serve that purpose. Since the validity

of a theory is contingent upon its ability to explain and predict, in these instances one has to wonder about theory-conserving operations. The history of this country is replete with instances of the creation of theories to demonstrate the inferiority of blacks; theories which can provide justification for the oppression of blacks; self-serving theories directed to maintaining the oppressor's illusions of his own innate superiority (Stamps, 1956).

Historically, biological or genetic factors have been invoked as explanatory modes to account for the status of blacks; today the vogue is to call forth environmental factors as explanatory modes. However, as the writer has noted elsewhere (Barnes, 1969) it is of small benefit to blacks whether an environmental hypothesis is chosen over a genetic hypothesis, "if explanation remains at the level of the black individual or family and does not begin to deal with forces in the larger society, in which case, contemporary social deprivation theories may be viewed as substituting environmental unchangeability for biologically determined immutability." (P. 39)

Also, as stated earlier, most of the theoretical explanations for low academic achievement cited, tend to locate its causes within the child and his family. Now, manifestly, it is logical to have the remedy, designed for intervention into a condition, rest upon one's concept of its causes. Thus, if the causes of academic failure among lower-status children are deemed to be within the child or his family, then this will be the point of focus for change. If it is thought to also reside within the social context of the child and family, that domain will be emphasized as well. The basic orientation implicitly or explicitly adopted by the social scientist, will move him in one direction or another in theory and research.

It is the writer's position that if the behavioral and social sciences are to realize their full potential in terms of the contributions they can make to the education of black and other oppressed minority children, they must modify theory and the research flowing therefrom such that the child and his family are not viewed in isolation from their social contexts. This means a modification of perspective on part of the behavioral and social

scientists in their study of the academic performance of blacks and other oppressed children. Another critical feature of the theoretical positions and empirical studies cited concerns their failure to view the black community as the highly complex and structured system that it is. The black writer Ralph Ellison (1967) placed this issue in perspective when asked by a group of young black writers to comment on how they might more accurately portray the complexity of the human condition, using the black experience as a theme. Ellison, among other things, stated that the black writer would never see his subjects so long as he accepted the black family as a broken one and a matriarchy or of Harlem as "piss on the wall and blood on the stairs. Such stereotypes, as all stereotypes, have some grain of truth in them, but they do not come close to reflecting the complexity of the black condition . . . ." (P. 87). In face of this, it is interesting to note that the concentration of the literature is on the lowest income, most oppressed black families and individuals. The findings from this group are used as an index to "understanding," "explaining," and

"describing" blacks. Obviously, to utilize information from this narrow spectrum of the black population as a basis for describing, explaining and predicting for blacks creates conditions for gross error. This practice probably explains some of the contradictions and paradoxes in the literature regarding blacks.

The writer, then, is arguing that social and behavioral scientists must be aware of the proto-assumptions of the theoretical positions and research methodologies with which they approach the study of blacks generally, if these fields are to yield their full potential with respect to this segment of the population. The perspective advanced here emphasizes the interdependence of the black child and family with other levels of society, and emphasizes the recognition of the black community as a complex social system. Further, this perspective shifts the focus from the behaviors of individuals to recurrent interchanges between people, i.e., to the context in which social behavior takes place.

If the analysis advanced here has any validity, it raises implications for social and behavioral science in terms of the need to subject its

theories, concepts, and methodologies, as applied to oppressed minority groups, to careful scrutiny, with a view toward assessing how they operate when black people are the object of their focus. The significance of this assertion seems obvious when one reflects on the nature and function of theories, concepts, etc. Theories have their origin in the need to understand, explain, or predict phenomena, an activity each of us engages in daily, implicitly or explicitly. Theories or their concepts may be ordered along the following continuums: implicitness-explicitness, specificity-generality, concreteness-abstractness. The theories of physics are characterized by explicitness, generality, and abstractness. The level of development of those of behavioral and social science are somewhere between the polar points of the continua. They were and are developed by those having a Western-Anglo-European heritage, in order to describe, explain, and understand the behavior of those from that same heritage. It is legitimate to inquire as to whether these constructions, as they stand, give rise to valid explanations when applied to those who do not fully

share that heritage. We know that ostensibly, the same behavior, arising in different contexts may have different significances. The obvious case regards similar behaviors arising in different cultures.

Kelman (1968) has produced a cogent analysis of the role of social values in the development of science. It is his contention that not only do values (and I would add, perspective) determine the directions scientific activity takes at any given time, but they also influence methodological considerations. Values direct the choice of theories or models, directs focus, whether on strengths or weaknesses, and influences the nature of definitions of behavioral events. Definitions of events by members of the privileged majority often are negative in connotation as applied to blacks, and other oppressed minority groups. White, (1970) analyzes several concepts in cognitive and dynamic schools of psychology such as "disadvantagement," "broken family," etc., noting underlying assumptions of deficiency or abnormality as pathology. He concludes that the cultural values of the dominant society are built into the definitions, and carry adverse implications for blacks. It seems obvious that definitions of what is "normal," "healthy,"

"deviant," "pathologic," etc., must relate to the conditions of a groups' existence, to its interests, and to what it conceives as socially desirable and socially undesirable. Total acceptance and application of white definitions of "health," "pathology," "growth," "delay of gratification," etc. to blacks leads to the ironical situation Barbara Sizemore (1968) so ably articulates in the "A/B" conceptualization. The paradigm is as follows: A creates a set of conditions for B. If B is to survive he must respond in those ways having survival value. A defines this behavior as "sick" or "abnormal," but, in fact, B's response is natural and appropriate to the conditions. A response which A would call normal would not have survival value for B. The plain facts are that blacks and whites do not live in the same social reality. That which is deviant behavior for a white might be healthy for a Black and vice versa. Rosa Parks' refusal to sit in the "proper place" on that bus in Montgomery in 1955 was problem or deviant behavior from the vantage point of whites in the antebellum south. How would you define the behavior of a bright 13 year old living in one of the more dehumanizing housing projects in Chicago, who almost daily, during

the school week, had the choice of fighting or running, but who chose to fight? This child was referred to me with the complaint of being overly aggressive and hypersensitive to provocation. Clearly the healthy response in this situation is not running, i.e., if we are concerned about the youngster's self-esteem, and psychological survival. The critical issue here concerns the perspective from which behavioral events are defined. For example, certain behaviors of black youth have been defined from the perspective of the dominant culture as "apathy or lack of communication with the school." From the black perspective, this same behavior might well be defined as "failure of school officials (decision makers) to provide the black community with needed educational concepts, strategies, and tactics for successful coping with a hostile white environment"; or majority designated "low achievement pressure, or failure to help the parents or mother to help the child develop the behavior necessary to translate high level motivation into concrete performance behaviors as the exclusion of black parents from a social system which uses race as a

basis of including or excluding groups from full participation in it," or "pessimism about future life chances as "the existence of racism in America and its legitimation by social and behavioral scientists who study the consequences and victims rather than the cause of rampant white racism."

In addition to the operation of values and perspective the formal definition of terms and selection of variables are their role in the operational definition of variables, an example being "deferred gratification" and its attendant, "time orientation," where the lesser of two values chosen "now" over the greater one promised "tomorrow," is designated "inability to delay" and is indicative of a "present-time" orientation, presumably a negative attribute. This is contrasted to behavior of the middle class individual who chooses the object of greater value to be delivered tomorrow, and is, thus, said to have "delay capacity" and a "future-time" orientation, a positive attribute. The writer could argue that the former behavior on part of a black or other oppressed minority

person demonstrates their insight into social reality and is consistent with healthy coping techniques. The difference between the two individuals lies not so much in their different orientations to time as in their different orientations to future time, or more specifically, to their actual futures. The future orientation of the middle class person presumes, among other things, an adequate supply of resources to be invested in the future, and a belief that the future will be sufficiently stable to justify his investment, and to permit utilization or consumption of his investment at a time, place, and manner of his own choosing and to his greater satisfaction. In other words, the system provides the latter with real alternatives. It is precisely the socially devalued childs' awareness of the future that moves him in the direction of "a bird in the hand." It is instructive in this regard to observe the behavior of investors on Wall Street when events occur to produce uncertainties in the future. At such times their selling and buying behaviors have all the earmarks of those labelled "inability to delay" and present-time orientation.[7] In other words,

social and behavioral scientists must examine carefully their operational definitions, and must ask themselves if the same set of operations defining concepts such as "female-dependence," "unresolved oedipal conflict," "deferred gratification," etc., can be applied with equal effectiveness and validity to all segments of the society; particularly those whose life conditions differ markedly from those of mainstream America.

The writer submits that the objections raised throughout the discussion point to factors which militate against behavioral and social sciences making the maximum contribution to the education of black and other oppressed minority children. The question, then, becomes: are there alternatives to the present order? The writer's response is a confident "yes."

The perspective advanced in this discussion, with its emphasis on the interdependence of child and family with other levels of society, the heterogeneity of blacks, (and other oppressed groups), the recognition of the black community as a complex social system, the shift of focus from

behaviors of individuals to recurrent interchanges between people, is an alternative, and may properly be called a social systems approach. It addresses many of the objections raised to the current modal approach, reflecting White-Anglo Perspective.

The system conception as put forth here has been called by some an "aggregate" or "growth and development" model while those perspectives which focus on the individual or his family have been called "mental health," "treatment," or "pathology" model (Adelson, 1970; Sizemore, 1969). Fundamental conceptual distinctions characterize these two modes of approach. The spelling out of some of their distinctions will facilitate our grasp of some of the assumptions underlying the various theoretical and methodological approaches currently in use.

Comparison and Contrast of Two Conceptual Approaches to Human Behavior

The Mental Health Model focuses on the individual in an attempt to understand or resolve a problem. There is an implicit assumption that the individual is responsible for his condition. The aggregate or systems model is social-psychological, economic-political; and biological-cultural.

This model is concerned with systems and subsystems, social and psychological, in interrelationship. In research, the point of focus is interchange between systems. As an approach, it does not focus on unidimensional explanations. For example, in attempting to understand the determinants of the present pattern of educational performance of lower-status children, it would look for complex patterns of interrelatedness of class, cultural, social, and racial inequities, and their various effects upon the student and outcome of the teacher-learner interaction. It would recognize that a change in context may be attended by a change in relationship on the part of those who are part of the system. This approach with altered interpretations which take into consideration the environmental or social context of those studies possibly can begin to put some of the various findings regarding blacks into a coherent scheme.

For the Mental Health Model, community tends to be defined as a political unit, a place from where the subjects come, or as a geographic unit. The Aggregate Model views the individual in relation to the

community, defined as "system of systems" and views the community as in dynamic interrelationship in a larger system. The theories and concepts of such sociologists as Parson (1951), Parson and Bales, (1955), Billingsley (1968), Tonnies (1957), Durkheim (1951), and Cooley (1962); and psychologists such as Lewin (1948), Mead (1934), and Sarbin (1954), among others, provide the basis for a new approach to thinking about man and his context.[8]

From the point of view of the "Mental Health" Model, when the individual alone is considered, the focus is on intrapsychic factors such as id, ego, superego, etc. From the Systems point of view the concepts utilized consider such aspects as system boundaries, open and closed systems, roles, statuses, structure, communication, communication barrier (von Bertalanffy, 1966), intra and intersystem relationships (Cartwright and Zander, 1960), etc. All of these variables can add to our understanding of the relations of individuals to their social contexts.

The Mental Health Model focuses on pathology, deficiencies, etc., while the systems model has the goal of exploring the conditions which impede or stimulate positive functioning or growth. To this end, the

base, in research, is on "normal" growth processes and the social systems which influence them. The Mental Health Model focus insists that the line of causation runs from the individual to society. For example, Moynihan's analysis of the black family in which he concludes that the black family is a"tangle of pathology" assumes the family to be responsible for the plight of the black American. This is tantamount to asserting that society is the creation of the family. But actually, the family is the product of society. In system terms, the line of causation runs from society to community, to family, to individual and not the reverse. The weakness, etc. of the individual family do not cause poverty and racism, the true pathology which afflicts all blacks.

From the perspective of the "Mental Health" Model evaluation or assessment is program focused, and in terms of the explicit criteria to which the program is addressed. It does not recognize that any program has both intended and unintended outcomes. In the systems model, the individual-in-relations-to-his-social-systems is studies for insights and understandings

which may lead to social action as well as to information regarding the status of the program, with reference to the criteria it seeks to achieve.

The concept of systems has been treated comprehensively by Bertalanffy (1966). In his treatment of General Systems Theory (GST) Bertalanffy states that "general systems theory contends that there are principles of systems in general or in defined subclasses of systems irrespective of the nature of systems or their components, or of the relations of forces between them." (p. 708) Thus, GST is general in that it attempts to examine all types of systems. A system is an organization of elements united in a form of regular interaction and interdependence. GST as an approach to organizing and looking at phenomenon is, thus, applicable to the cell (biological system), to the individual (psychological system), to groups or society (social systems). The focus of the perspective offered here is on psychological and social systems.

The concept of a social system has been treated comprehensively by Talcott Parson (1951) and associates (1955). A social system is an

aggregation of social roles or persons bound together by a pattern of mutual interaction and interdependence. It has boundaries which enable us to distinguish the internal from the external environment and typically is a system for social units smaller than itself and in turn, a subsystem for social units larger than itself.

While grossly oversimplified, the black family as a social system has been diagrammed by Billingsley (1968) as indicated in Figure 1. As depicted, the family is embedded in a network of mutually interdependent relationships with the black community and wider society. Just as the family is a subsystem of the black community, so are various patterns of interactions (dyads: father-son; mother-daughter; brother-system; triads: grandmother-mother-daughter, etc.) subsystems of the family, which for them is a social system. The individuals in these various patterns, in turn are subsystems to the larger interactive patterns, dyad, triad, etc., within the family.

A key consideration in all of this concerns the mutually interdependent relations existing between the family and its members, on the one hand, and

the family and the black community, and the black community and wider society on the other hand.

The educational subsystem is among those having an impact on the community and, through it, the family. It may be, among other things, that the nature of the relationship of the family to the community, and in turn, the nature of the interchanges between school and community are key factors in the academic achievement of the child. It may be that when the interchanges between the school and the child's community and family are mutually supportive, the school taking an initiating role in making itself a part of the child's community, academic achievement is positively affected. This perspective also conceives of blacks as the highly complex, heterogeneous, diverse people that they are. Even though, in this country, black people are viewed as a group apart from other people, and as showing common intragroup attributes, behaviors, and conditions, great variations are also obvious. Billingsley (1968) offers the concept "ethnic subsociety" as a means of capturing this duality. This concept was taken from

Milton Gordon's theoretical work Assimilation in American Life (1964). An ethnic group is defined as a relatively large configuration of people with "shared feeling of peoplehood." In this society, such groups are organized around race, religion, national origin, or some combination of these. Gordon states that, common to the ethnic group

> is the social-psychological element of a special sense of both ancestral and future-oriented identification with the group. These are the 'people' of my ancestors, therefore, they are my people, and will be the people of my children and their children. With members of other groups I may share political participation, occupational relationships, common civic enterprise, perhaps even an occasional warm friendship, but in a very special way, which history has decreed, I share a sense of indisoluble and intimate identity with this group and not that within the larger society and the world. (p. 29)

This conception seems to reflect the reality of the existence of black people. It also reflects the growing black consciousness or awareness of black peoplehood, which is evolving at a rapid rate in black communities throughout the country. While blacks are one, as members of a color caste system, and by virtue of their common peoplehood, they are not a homogeneous mass. Billingsley (1968) has depicted the black community as an ethnic subsociety as indicated in Figure 2.

Billingsley's conceptual model makes use of three dimensions in describing the black community as an ethnic subsociety. They are social dimensions on which members within an ethnic group vary, namely, social class, rural or urban residence, and region of the country lived in. For our purposes then, black groups are not only blacks to be compared or contrasted with whites, they may also be upper class, middle class, or lower class, with northern, southern or western residence, with urban or rural backgrounds, and significantly they may be meaningfully compared and contrasted with each other. Consider the additional complexity added by further distinctions within an overall class level, e.g., the lower class is divided into the non-working poor, the working poor and the working non-poor.

As indicated by Billingsley (1968) the significance of social class is not to be able to make statements such as middle class whites and blacks have more in common than do middle and lower class blacks, etc. Such a formulation obscures more than it reveals, and fails to make a distinction

between the different types of identities people share. Gordon (1964) conceptualizes two types of identities people share: historical and participational identification.

> With a person of the same social class but of different ethnic group, one shares behavioral similarities but not a sense of peoplehood. With those of the same ethnic group but different social class one shares the sense of peoplehood but not behavioral similarities. The only group which meet both these criteria are people of the same ethnic group and social class. (p. 53)

As Billingsley (1968) suggests, even though social class lines among blacks are less rigid than among other groups, social class distinctions within the black community do provide a distinct basis of differentiation which helps to condition the lives of blacks. Hence, one would expect differential responses to external impingements, or interchanges with the various subsystems by people located at different positions in the structure, differential responses or interchanges that have implications for minority children's developmental status generally, and educational achievement in particular.

Summary and Conclusions

The perspective brought forth in this paper argues for new directions in the educations of oppressed minority groups, and addresses needed assessment of the theories, concepts, and methods of the social and behavioral sciences as applied to members of these groups, requisite to a fully meaningful contribution to innovative efforts in this area. A critical strategy necessary to break the familiar cycle involves an explicit recognition of the minority child's community, group, and culture. The learning environment must become a part and supportive of the child's community. This perspective considers the whole child, recognized that he has both cognitive and affective needs, that he come from a family, which exists as a part of an ethnic subsociety, which, itself is part of a larger society, which devalues the child, his family, and his community, and recognizes that the process of education must address itself to these dimensions explicitly. The behavioral and social sciences can play a critical role in this process by facilitating this endeavor. Even where

cognitive achievement does occur, it is not enough if such achievement is attained at the exclusion of the child's own culture. Fanon's Black Faces and White Masks speaks eloquently to the pernicious effects of education attained in the latter terms. In effect, it leads to "gaining the brain but losing the soul." Thus, the social and behavioral sciences must address these issues if they are to be positive forces in the educational process as it acts upon these children.

A central implication of this perspective is the necessity for a redefinition of educational programs, especially childhood education, to include a total developmental approach. This change in definition would require a shift in focus in the evaluation process from the child (conceived of primarily as a cognitive subsystem) to the whole person-in-a-social-context, not as a fragmented being separated from his surrounding. Given this perspective, research on a particular problem area would not be concerned only with narrowly defined approach such as the evaluation of pupil cognitive change, as a function of being exposed

to a program of compensatory education, but would take into account those wider experiences which influence growth, positively or negatively. There is also a critical necessity for behavioral science research, concerned with understanding and resolving social problems, to be more explicit about its underlying assumptions, values, and goals. Laboratory-based research may be able to remain at the level of "pure knowledge," -knowledge for its own sake - but research into problems concerned with understanding and resolving social problems cannot. Thus, a developmental model appears to be the appropriate one for the behavioral sciences, as applied in this area. This model incorporates growth as its value base. Academic mastery may be offered as a significant aspect of growth. It must be realized that neither the behavioral scientist or researcher, as a person, nor the processes or products of research are entirely value-free. The observations of the social scientist cannot be carried out from a wholly external vantage-point, nor can the findings of social research stand by themselves as scientifically valid facts about the world. Further, the role of the social scientist cannot be totally separated from that of

human being, of citizen, and of participant in social action. Further, definition of the problem cannot be totally separated from those defining the problem. The selection of dimensions and measurement operations reflect the cultural and value perspective of those developing the concepts, defining dimensions specifying operations, etc. Probably few would argue that the majority of the research on black children today is received, executed and reported out of the white middle class perspective, with no meaningful participation by blacks. Ditto for other oppressed minorities. There must be a measure of black, brown and red perspective incorporated into behavioral and social science scholarship.

These modifications in research on black and other oppressed minority groups could lead to: (1) improvement in social science scholarship through their impact on problem selection and formulation, on methodological considerations, such as sampling, operationalizing concepts, defining concepts, specification of two-tailed statistical tests, interpretation of findings, etc., (2) a reduction in the "white knows best" diction, (3) a study of black people per se and thereby contribute clarification to the

condition of blacks, as contrasted to viewing blacks as objects worthy of study only when they can be compared to whites - an ethnocentric syndrome of white behavioral and social scientists, (4) a cessation on the part of behavioral and social scientists in the legitimation of societal myths concerning blacks, which gives scientific respectability and justification to white racism, individual and institutional, and (5) recognition of the need for theories and methodologies that recognize the plural nature of the society, and an accompanying move away from the White-Anglo Conformity perspective with its tendency to judge blacks and other minority groups outside the context of their unique history, their experience in this country, and their contemporary-social conditions, which tends to see deviations from it as negative in consequence.

Finally, the social scientist is confronted with the question as to the nature of the social forces his research represents or his theories reflect. What is the nature of the social processes they help to foster? What is the quality of the social values they help to promote? Rather than hiding behind "scientific objectivity," social and behavioral

scientists, are called upon to assume their responsibilities for the human beings in our society and become monitors for social justice. The foregoing represents some of the characteristics the writer would see in humanistic behavioral and social sciences. He believes that these are the directions future developments in social and behavioral sciences must take if they are to serve all peoples of the society and not merely represent and protect and maintain the "White Anglo-Saxon Ideal."

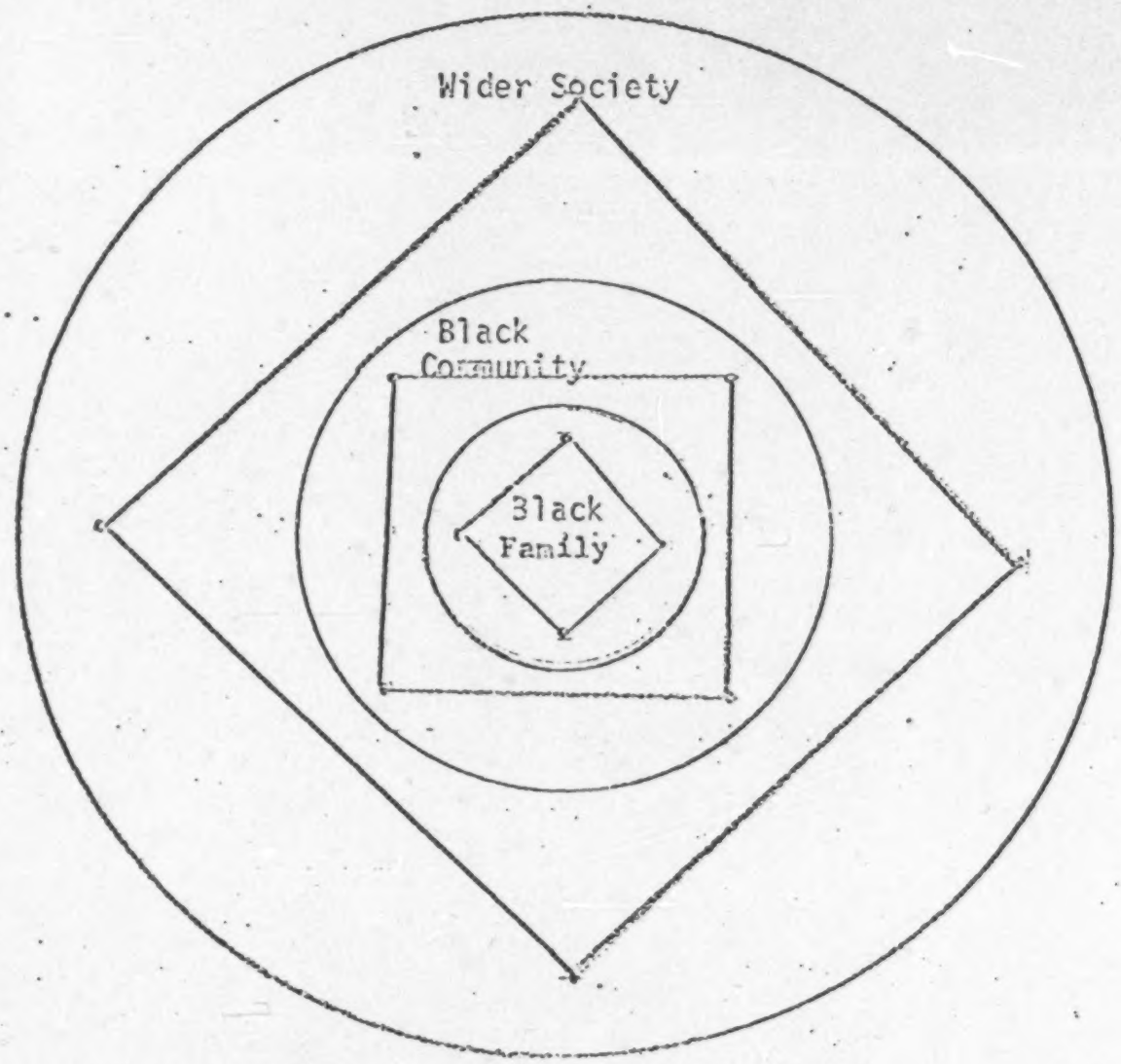

FIGURE 1

The Black Family as a Social System (Adapted from: A. Billingsley, Black Families in White America, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).

The family is embedded in a matrix of mutually interdependent relationships with the Black Community and the Wider Society.

There are subsystems within the family: Husband-wife; Mother-son; Father-daughter, Grandmother-mother-daughter, etc.

The Black Community includes: Schools, Churches, Lodges, Social Clubs, Funeral Societies, Organized Systems of hustling and other institutions.

The Wider Society consists of major institutions: values, political economic, health, welfare and communication subsystems.

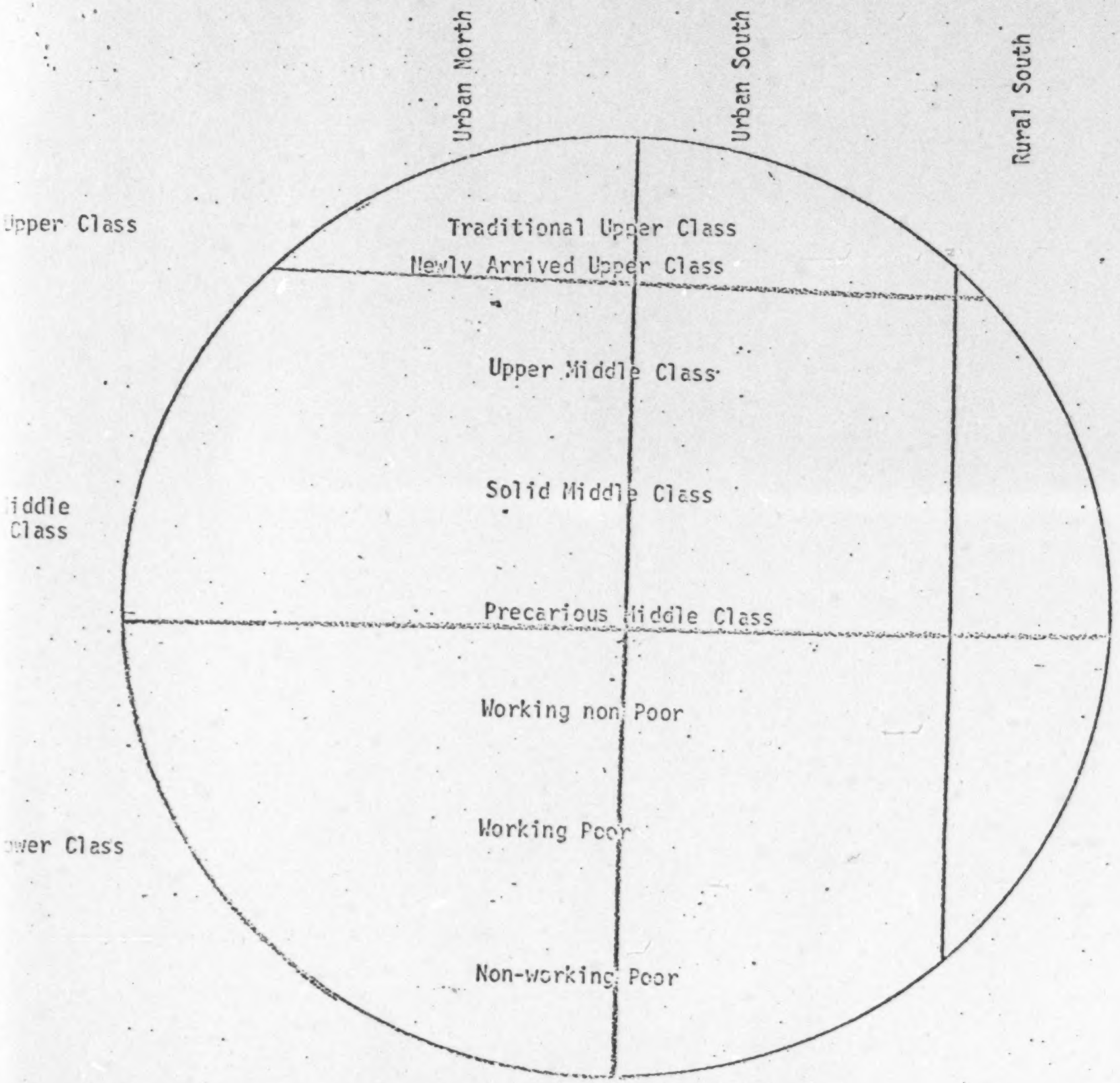

FIGURE 2

The Black Community as an Ethnic Subsociety (Adapted from: A. Billingsley, Black Families in White American, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1968).

This figure is conceptual and does not reflect exact social and geographic distribution of black population. In 1966 about 50% of all black families lived in Urban North, 25% in Urban South and 25% in Rural South.

Using income as an index of social class, about 50% of all black families fall into Lower class, about 40% in Middle class, and about 10% in Upper class.

FOOTNOTES

1. The findings reported by K. B. Clark, Dark Ghetto: Dilemma of Social Power. New York & Evanston: Harper Torch Books (Harper & Row) 1965, concerns the academic performance in reading and arithmetic of oppressed minority group children in Harlem. It is important to note that the data reported were generated by standard tests administered throughout the New York City school system. The same pattern of retarded performance was reflected whether the standard used was "grade expectancy", performance norms of New York City school children as a whole, or the National Norming group for the standardize instruments used.

Even though the findings cited by K. B. Clark refer specifically to New York City children, they are considered similar to the situation prevailing in other urban inner city school systems for these groups. The concept of "accumulative deficit" was coined by M. Deutsch to describe the tendency on part of poor black children to fall progressively behind in academic performance as they advance through the grades. In the survey by J. S. Coleman, et al. Equality of Educational Opportunity. U.S. Department of H.E.W, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966, for information on a national sample.

2. The references cited in each explanation-category are presented as illustrations of the work done in these areas and not representative as exhaustive studies.

3. K. B. Clark, A Possible Reality: A Design for the Attainment of High Academic Achievement for the Students of the Public Elementary & Junior High Schools for Washington, D. C., New York, MARC, Inc., 1970, 3-11 summarized the theories of educational underachievement in this fashion.

4. E. Barnes in Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques, Selected Convention Papers, CEC: Washington, D.C., 1969, criticizes recent relevant literature in this domain from the standpoint among others of the status of the black community, family, and individual within society. The criticisms brought to bear in this article are relevant to other dimensions of functioning covered in the current paper. M. Deutsch, The Disadvantaged Child & The Learning Process; In H.A. Passow (ed) Education in Depressed Areas. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963 treats this issue in detail within the context of several background & performance variables. The concrete & abstract modes are related to the nature & context of verbal interchanges between the child & his parents. D. P. Ausubel, How reversible are the cognitive & motivational effects of cultural deprivation? Implications for teaching the culturally deprived child. Urban Education, 1964, 1, 16-38, focuses on the difficulty black youngsters experience in switching from a concrete to an abstract mode.

5. Conceptualizations by B. C. Rosen, Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome, American Sociological Review, 1959, 24, 47-60, and E. Epps. correlates of Academic Achievement Among Northern & Southern Urban

Negro Students, J. Soc. Issues, 1969, 25, 55-70, point out the weaknesses conceptualization in the areas of achievement motivation and aspiration levels. Epp's concepts of "hope for success' and perceived probability of success" make for greater precision in studies of achievement motivation and provides a basis for clearer distinction between this concept and that ofaspiration level. Rosen's conceptualization advances the concept of achievement motivation by specifying these factors upon which achievement motivation depends in this society. These three factors he labels collectively as "achievement syndrome." The factors are" McClelland's "achievement motive," a personality characteristic; achievement-value orientations, involves a concern with social mobility and behavior patterns instrumental in pursuing long-term goals, and educational and vocational aspirations, concerns the levels of academic and occupational achievements desired by parents for their children and by the children themselves.

6. For a representative article providing a general picture, based on research finding of development and functioning of blacks, individual and family, see Lee Rainwater, "Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower-Class Family," In T. Parsons & K. B. Clark (Eds.), The Negro American, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967, 160-204.

7. E. Liebow, Tally's Corner. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1967, 63-71 provides an analysis of this concept from the point of view & life conditions of his street corner subjects. This analysis is forceful in its demonstration of the criticalness of the relationship of definer to the definition. It raises the important question of having input from the community, from which the subjects come, into the process of defining behavioral events to be focused upon. It certainly raises serious question about the practice of having a person from one cultural net give significance to behavioral events (define) arising from another cultural net.

8. A number of persons have begun to make use of these frameworks in therapeutic situations, such as M. Jones, Therapeutic community, New York: Basic Books, 1953; V. Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy. Palo Alto, California: Science & Behavior Books, 1964; R. MacGregar, et al. Multiple Impact Therapy With Families. New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1966. A beginning is in evidence in the research of Social Psychologist such as I. Katz,University of Michigan, Edgar Epps, University of Chicago & C. Clark, Stanford University. However, it is the case nevertheless that generally the community of the child is left out of investigations. However, in focusing on an increasingly large segment of the child's social context, investigators seem to be getting away from the tendency to speak of the environment in terms of the historical-continuity theory and are beginning to focus on the role of subsystems in the behavior of lower-status individuals & groups.

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